

Fort Polk has been designated as a home for one of the new, transformational Interim Brigade Combat Teams IBCTs. Furthermore, I am proud to say that Fort Polk will serve as the training site for all IBCTs.

Louisiana Highway 28 is one of the primary access roads into and out of Fort Polk. Highway 28 is the direct route from Fort Polk to the former England Air Force Base in Alexandria, Louisiana. I mention this because any military equipment designated for Fort Polk that is transported via C-130 must be trucked to Fort Polk if it is non-wheeled or non-tracked from the former England AFB. If military vehicles are tracked or wheeled, they then trek the forty miles from England to Fort Polk along Hwy. 28. No matter how the equipment arrives at Fort Polk, the heavy trucks and military vehicles cause tremendous wear and tear to Highway 28.

With the coming of the IBCTs to Fort Polk, the stresses on Hwy. 28 will only be exacerbated. Louisiana Highway 28 is a two lane highway that currently operates over capacity, as it already has a traffic volume of 2,000 cars per day. When you add 2,000 cars a day and 10 training rotations a year to a two-lane highway, the deterioration of the road surface and the congestion of the roadway will lead to numerous accidents, and possibly fatalities.

The commanding general of Fort Polk, Brigadier General Jason Kamiya, and the people of Louisiana want to see Hwy. 28 expanded to four lanes. A four lane highway will improve the safety conditions on the roadway, and four lanes will allow for faster deployment of units stationed and training at Fort Polk. During times of war, like we find ourselves in now, it is critical that units can deploy to the battlefield as quickly as possible. But, it is also important that our military achieve quick deployments in training because our service men and women will fight only well as they train.

The designation of Highway 28 as a Defense Access Road will allow the Department of Defense to work with the State of Louisiana to pool funds to make necessary repairs to the highway and increase the road surface to four lanes to best accommodate the IBCTs. DOD will only be required to participate in funding to the degree to which usage of the highway is out of the ordinary due to the military installation or military activity. It only makes sense that the Federal Government would aid State Governments to make repairs caused by federal usage or alterations to the highway requested by the Federal government. Finally, there is no cost associated with the authorization.

The second amendment pertains to the most crucial problem facing our United States Navy, both today and in future generations, the dwindling size of the Navy fleet. The 2001 Quadrennial Review stated that the Navy must maintain a fleet size of least 310 ships to achieve its mission. This amend-

ment makes it the policy of the United States for the budget of the United States for fiscal years after FY 2003, and for the future-years defense plan, to include sufficient funding for the Navy to maintain a fleet of at least 310 ships. Additionally, the President must certify within the budget of the United States that sufficient funding has been allocated to maintain a fleet of 310 ships. If such a certification is not made, the President must explain within the budget of the United States why the certification cannot be made. Today, Navy ships sail globally to ensure a world-wide American presence and to immediately respond to threats against America's national security. This amendment will make certain that the President funds a fleet at least capable of meeting the Navy's current mission objectives or explains why the Navy will fall shy of a 310 ship fleet.

Without the Navy, the United States could not have prosecuted the war in Afghanistan as successfully as we have. On numerous occasions throughout the war, our armed forces have been denied access to land bases in foreign countries from which our forces could operate. Nevertheless, when our armed forces cannot forward deploy because there are no willing host countries, the U.S. Navy provides our military with acres of floating sovereign territory from which the U.S. military can deploy. Without the firepower, logistics, and transport capabilities of the Navy, our ability to retaliate to the terrorist actions of September 11th would have been compromised.

However, if Congress and the President do not allocate critical resources to shipbuilding, the Navy will soon fall well below the minimum level of ships required for the Navy to properly provide for America's defense, a job the Navy has performed so admirably. Today, the Navy has approximately 315 ships in its fleet, a number which cannot dwindle or the Navy's operations will be gravely challenged. This year, the President's budget funded only 5 ships. The Senate has taken needed action to provide an additional \$690 million in advance procurement funding for 2 surface ships and a submarine. If current shipbuilding rates are sustained, the Navy will only have a fleet of 238 ships within 35 years. That is simply unacceptable. 310 ships is the lowest allowable floor, but Congress and the President should strive to maintain a Navy of at least 350 ships to guaranty America's sovereign needs on the high seas.

Accordingly, this amendment makes it the national defense policy of the United States to uphold a Navy of at least 310 ships, as spelled out in the Quadrennial Defense Review of 2001. Moreover, shipbuilding must be a priority of the President, and the President must certify in future budgets and in future year defense plans, beginning with FY 2004, that sufficient funds have been made available to sustain a fleet of at least 310 ships or explain why

such funds have not been made available. I hope the Senate will support this amendment to provide for our Navy which has provided for the American people since the Revolutionary War.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### INTERNATIONAL PEACE TROOPS IN AFGHANISTAN

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I love to read. I love to especially read history. One of the fine experiences I have had was reading a book by James Michener entitled "Caravans." It was about the history of Afghanistan. I read this book many years ago. Michener had already written "Hawaii" and some other books that were very famous, but this was a bestseller, and rightfully so.

I really developed a strong, positive feeling about the people of Afghanistan after having read that book.

As a result of what has happened to our country being so heavily involved in Afghanistan in the last 15 years, 20 years, I have reflected many times, since I read that book and since we have been so heavily involved in Afghanistan, about the people of Afghanistan and what has happened to them. Of course, I have given speeches on the Senate floor about how the reign of terror of the Taliban was a reign of terror to everyone in Afghanistan, but especially women. And during that period of time, women suffered irreparably in many instances.

The reason I mention this today is that during and since the Loya Jirga that has been held in Afghanistan, delegates who have spoken out for human rights, including the Minister of Women's Affairs, have been threatened and in many instances intimidated.

These threats going on in Afghanistan today, along with continued reports of violence and intimidation in the provinces, point to the imperative need for U.S. support for the immediate expansion of peace troops in Afghanistan. We need peacekeepers. I am disappointed that the administration is saying: Fine, we will make sure we have a presence in Kabul, but the rest of Afghanistan can try to fend for itself.

As I have indicated, in the provinces outside of Kabul, there are bad things happening to a lot of Afghan people but especially the women. Despite pleas from the United Nations, the Afghan interim government, and the women's rights community and people from throughout the world, governments throughout the world, the Bush administration has refused to expand the international security assistance force